

**Draft Minutes of the
Town Forest Steering Committee Meeting
1/23/18**

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Tuesday, January 23, 2018.

Steering Committee Members: Jon Bouton, Angela Emerson, Mary Hutchins, Tom Kahl, Allan McDougall, Sean Ogle, Lisa Philips, Gary Schall, Chuck Wooster, Richard Wright, .

Staff: Parks & Recreation Director Scott Hausler and Planner Matt Osborn.

Others: Consultants Drew Pollak-Bruce and Ellie Wachtel of SE Group.

Consultant Drew Pollak-Bruce started the meeting 4:04 p.m. Introductions were made. Drew provided background information about the project, SE Group and sub-consultant Arrowwood Environmental.

Hartford was selected as one of ten communities in Vermont to receive a grant from the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program. A total of forty applications were submitted. This grant program assists Vermont communities interested in addressing issues and opportunities in the use and stewardship of their town forest and generates town forest recreation plans. The planning model includes public visioning sessions, needs assessments, and a plan that provides actionable strategies to assist communities in taking the next steps. The end product will be a comprehensive action-oriented town forest stewardship and recreation plan.

Drew Pollak-Bruce noted that the project purpose is to empower communities to move forward with confidence in their Town Forest. Four key areas include:

- Develop a Town Forest recreation toolkit
- Develop a compelling and inspiring vision to guide future management
- Develop discrete, clear and action-oriented strategies for improvement of recreation and stewardship that achieves the vision.
- Fostering implementation with support for local plan adoption and implementation

Drew Pollak-Bruce stated that the Recreation Toolkit will include:

- Existing Conditions and Assessment Pod
- Public Engagement Pod
- Natural Resources Pod
- Plan Development Pod
- Implementation Pod

Project deliverables will include a robust Town Forest Recreation Plan with four chapters:

- An Introduction and Community Profile
- Public Engagement and Needs Assessment
- Town Forest Vision Framework
- Town Forest Action Plan

Drew Pollak-Bruce stated that the vision framework document to guide the future direction of the Town Forest and include a community vision statement, goals for key focus areas, discussion of potential recreational uses identified by the community. He noted that Action Plans will identify:

- Project Description
- Action Responsibility
- Timing (immediate, short, medium, long-term)
- Partners Involved
- Action or Planning Dependencies
- Available Support Resources
- Funding and Grant Opportunities
- Magnitude of Costs

Drew Pollak-Bruce noted that there will be an implementation table, bubble diagram maps, an implementation toolkit with best practices for design in the Plan. The process is designed to seek public engagement will result in buy-in for the Town Forest Plan.

Drew Pollak-Bruce noted that the Draft Strategies will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and then presented to the public in June. The Action Plan will be presented to the public in September or October. The Implementation Summit will take place in October or November.

Drew Pollak-Bruce noted that there is a survey that was added to solicit input from community members who are unable to attend tonight's open house. The survey will be released this week.

Drew Pollak-Bruce stated that the Steering Committee needs to commit to the project schedule, conduct timely reviews of draft materials, regularly attend Steering Committee meetings, provide energy and be a plan ambassador. Drew noted that there will be meetings without the consultant team. He suggested attending other community events to get the word out about the project. The idea is to move forward to implementation once the plan has been completed.

Drew Pollak-Bruce went through a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

There was discussion about incorporating the adjacent Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge into the project. There was agreement that the focus should be on the Town Forest and how the Wildlife Refuge relates to the Town Forest.

Drew Pollak-Bruce encouraged Steering Committee members to attend the Town Forest Open House.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.